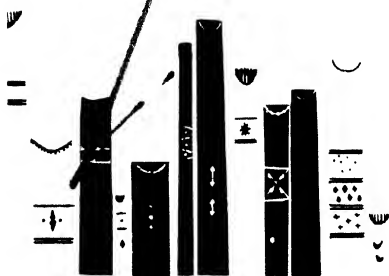


68-56614

reference collection book



kansas city
public library
kansas city,
missouri



KANSAS CITY, MO. PUBLIC LIBRARY



0 0001 5185520 2

STACKS REF 811 D912f

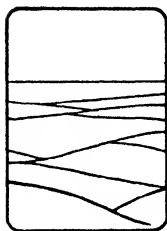
Duncan, Thomas William,
1905-
From a Harvard notebook,
1929.

FROM A HARVARD NOTEBOOK

From a Harvard Notebook

by

THOMAS W. DUNCAN



THE MAIZELAND PRESS

DES MOINES

1929

Copyright
1929
by
The Maizeland Press

TO
JOHN LIVINGSTON LOWES
WITH ADMIRATION
AND GRATITUDE

FLY LEAF NOTATION

Harvard Square Nocturne

AUSTERE as if engraved on steel, profound
The city slumbers, dreaming of bright days
When Emerson strolled down frequented ways
And nodded to the grey Thoreau. No sound
Disturbs the frosty, clear New England night.
Now Harvard Yard is dark; on Brattle street
A lone patrolman saunters on his beat;
Through trees the winter moon gleams sharply white.

If spirits rise, as great grandames have said,
And leave their lonely cities of the dead,
Then Cambridge is the rendezvous of ghosts
Who died in youth. The streets are stirred by hosts
Of roistering wraiths of cavalier young men,
Who, having lived here, now return again.

IMPRIMIS

I STUMBLED up the littered subway steps
Choked by stale air, the acrid smell of dust;
And dizzyed by the drunken, crazy rush
Of steel cars through blind earth.

The blaze of day
Smote like a white puff of exploding powder.
My gasping lungs gulped air that purged and cleansed,
And my bruised body drank the sundrenched noon.

The sign read "Harvard Square." There was no square,
But only grimfaced buildings, like brick levees
Walling the traffic river's surge and toss
That snarled and crushed about the little island
Where people clung. A nasal voice rasped "Extra!"
A hot breath shouted "Cab, sir?" in my ear,
And I was numb and dazed and sick for home.

And then I turned . . . and then I saw the Yard.
Something began to swell and clog my throat
As if my Adam's apple suddenly
Had swollen to a choking cocoanut.
My legs went limber as green willow switches.
I shook; I trembled like a starveling cur
Cut by keen blades of midnight winter winds.

This wouldn't do! I must get calm! Why this
Just wouldn't do at all! Suppose a sophomore
Should catch me gaping like the thing I was!
I bit my lip, sharp angles seemed to melt;
The cars and people blurred, and everything
Looked like the world seen through a rain smeared
window.

Somehow I crossed the street—and still the Yard
Was far too like the Yard that I had seen
In adolescent dreams to be a thing
That I could touch, could feel beneath my feet.
Yet there it was—the curving gravelled paths,
The brown, rough trees, the breathless dignity
Of Hollis and of Massachusetts Halls!
I plopped myself down on the tender grass
And thought I saw, in front of Harvard Hall,
The musket of a cocked hat Continental
Who paced his little beat of sentry duty
With young lips grim. His serious blue eyes
Raised now and then to study earnestly
The flag with thirteen stripes that idly flapped
Against the afternoon. . .

And just as I was stirring to get up
A score of dandies spilled across the walk.
They wore high stocks and folded thick cravats,

And some had silky beards and some had sideburns,
And all were talking eagerly of war—
Sumter had fallen, and the president
Had called for volunteers—well, here they were!
They'd drink at Joe's, and then they'd get the coach
For Boston, where they'd join to free the niggers!
Their talk trailed out of hearing; and I wondered
Which of them fell at Gettysburg, and which
Crawled back; and which, if any, came back whole
And clean . . . to march on Decoration day. . . .

Perhaps it didn't matter. Certainly
It didn't matter to these lads who rode
Precariously perched on high bicycles
Whose nickled spokes gleamed when they caught the sun.
To them old wars were mildewed history—
Dates to be learned before some stiff exam,
Dim times when men wore funny clothes and when
Lincoln had made a speech that old man Pokes
Would always read on Independence day—
His thin, weak voice half drowned by firecrackers
That naughty boys, despite the constable,
Kept popping off beneath the speaker's stand.
Perhaps one time they'd been those naughty boys
Instead of Harvard men. . . .

The crew, they said,
Next week would certainly far outstrip Yale
And doublebreasted grey suits were the thing—
Indeed, quite *fin de siecle*—and Friday's dance
Would be just "out of sight," especially
With that new, poignant piece, "After the Ball,"
Which soothed your partner to a sighing mood
So that, if you were daring, you might kiss
Her hand . . . and quote a bit of Tennyson. . . .

Well, that was Harvard's past, that and much more
Which I could never know—but this I knew:
Days here had always glistened with the splendid
Untarnished silver banners of first Youth—
Life was a champing stallion to be ridden
Wheeling and rearing down a thunderous road!
Life was a horn to blow, a drum to beat;
A bull with brazen hooves to charge against;
A feast of silver grapes in golden bowls
With pheasants' hearts, red wine in ivory cups,
Served in a pagan, marble banquet hall.
Life was a land of sweet, brown rolling hills;
A cliff of snowy clouds burnt by the sun;
A deep, swift river laughingly to swim;
An unclimbed mountain to be lightly scaled;
A song to sing through days that flashed like swords:

*Squeeze the grape into the cup!
Tamp the weed into the pipe!
Hone the knife and carve the roast!
Life's indeed a jolly host!
Life cries, "Pluck me! I am ripe!"
All together, Bottoms Up!*

*Brim with wine the shining cup!
Brim with song the ringing hall!
Drink to good lads that are dead!
Drink to lost lads that are wed!
Drink to brave lads one and all!
Come! Together! Bottoms Up!*

Yes, Youth was clean as pebbles on a beach. . . .
But Youth was stormy like a windlashed sea.
It could be sick and bitter . . . it could hurt.
With whips of redhot wire Youth could flay!
Its fire maned steeds could rip you limb from limb!
And sometimes Youth was tired . . . was tired . . .
was tired. . . .

MIDYEARS

YOUR ROOM is dark but for the cone of light
The study lamp cuts sharply on the desk.
Charred butts of countless cigarettes are heaped

High in the tray, like corpses piled askew
Outside the walls of Troy.

Your pipe goes out,
 You pause, refill and light. How the match trembles!
 Surely your body cannot be tired yet!
 Why, it is early—the great brazen clock
 Which tops the tower of Memorial Hall
 Just sent three booming strokes across dark roofs.
 But if your legs and back are cramped your brain,
 Goaded and lashed on by your stubborn will,
 Is steaming like the body of a charger
 Against the thick battalions of all knowledge.

This too is Harvard: eyes that sting and burn
Behind their glasses and beneath their shade;
Blood that crawls sluggishly through weary veins;
Muscles that ache and fingers that are knotted
About a smudgy pencil; nights when hours
Slip by like the thin taunting wraiths of time
You've wasted earlier in the semester.

This too is Harvard: sleep that comes like waves
Of thick, black, oily smoke—you see the dawn
Sifting across the ground like grey chalkdust.
You stagger to your feet, drop to your bed,
While on your numbing mind there beats a tune:
At nine fifteen this morning . . . nine fifteen. . .

COLLEGE COURSES

ENGLISH 1

Chaucer Dines with John of Gaunt

ANOTHER goldgreen olive, Master Geoffrey?
Brought in great jars from warm Italian hills.
Olives—as smoothly tart as girls of Florence
With warm round bodies and thin hidden blades . . .
You’ve not forgot the dark Italian dames. . . .

Ho, boy! More tapers! More logs on the blaze!
The autumn nights grow sharp and drag out long.
See how strange draughts suck at the tapestries
And swirl about our ankles. . . . Ah, do have
Another squab’s breast! More fat chestnuts? More
Of these delicious red haws soaked in wine?
Or wine itself? Come, come, your goblet’s empty.
There lurks strange madness in these hot white wines
Of Lepe; and this aged, clear red Bordeaux
Is like a running flame that sears dull worry
Out of the body.

Worry! I grow old—
And Richard is but nineteen—(curse his soul!)
Nineteen—and king! What could I not have done
Had Fortune set me on my nephew’s throne!
And yet I’ve stood above the throne, I’ve wiped

My muddy feet upon its purple cushions
While none has dared to bid me cease. . . .

And yet
He is the king. Pah! Pah! A hollow name
That bowing fools mouth . . . king . . . Your
Majesty. . . .
While I have been but Duke of Lancaster!
More wine? The silver pitcher's empty? Ned!
Beshrew the lad! Sirrah! More wine I say!
Zounds! How the bloody churls loaf! Time perhaps
To slit some tongues again or clip some ears!
Ha! Now he bustles!

Ah, dear Geoffrey, though
I hold all England in my dry cracked palm
I still must kneel before that madcap nephew!
Perhaps eight years ago I should have slipped
Strange powders in his drink, or paid fierce men
To choke him in the velvet draperies
Of his vast bed. . . .

(The plum cake's excellent.
Some cherries with thick syrup?) But that way
Was—ah—so gross, so artless, any dolt
Can kill—it is so simple, like snuffing
A taper out. I thought to rule him as
A master rules a scholar.

He grows wise.

Loose lips are whispering in his greedy ears,
He schemes I know not what . . . and I grow sick
Of plots and intrigues.

I should rather follow
The warm tracks of a fox behind my hounds,
Or spear a grunting boar, or ride astride
An eager mare and watch my falcon swoop
To rip the feathered plumpness of a quail.

The tapers sink. Sirrah! Fresh tapers, ho!
See how they fling a network of mauve shadow
And yellow light across the rotting woof
Of rust red, tattered hangings. Lady Blanche
Was fond of that one—knights in leafgreen armor.
Last summer's moths and mildew plundered it. . . .

What was I saying? Ah, the court, the court!
The packs of lying rascals soon will turn
Young Richard quite against me. In two years
He will be twentyone.

There are worse deaths
Than placing one's smooth neck against a block,
All roughly clotted with dried blood, and seeing
The blacktoothed hangman stroke his spadeshaped
beard

And run his thumb along the razor edge
Of a broad axe. . . .

Yes, there are, I suppose,
Worse deaths—but I cannot recall them now. . . .

Perhaps I weary you? You're sure? But then
You always were one to sit quietly
And muse . . . and listen. Sometimes I suspect
There's much behind those clear green eyes of yours
That's safer known to you alone.

Sometimes
I think you mock me, Geoffrey. Those damned tales
You put in verse are shrewder than they seem—
Yet you who weave them must be wiser still.
You seem not like a verse smith—such coxcombs
Too often are unvarnished fools. Perhaps
You waste too many hours with your ink
And scratching quills. But let that pass. I'm fond
Of you, good Geoffrey. Since it pleases you
To blacken paper with your harmless rhymes
It pleases me to hear them read . . . although
I sometimes doze . . . as when you read the long,
Long one about dear Blanche—and she fresh laid
Beneath a heap of brown earth in the park.

Since then my mistress Catherine has not
Affected you. . . . That night when you had gone
She begged—between our kisses—that I burn
The verses about Blanche. “That foolish doggerel
My sister’s idiotic husband penned”—
’Twas thus she cleped the lines. . . . I fell asleep
While she talked on.

Ah, Geoffrey, poets make
More enemies than regents. . . .

Have you done?
The night is young. We’ll wrap us in thick furs—
Against these whoreson draughts—pile high the logs,
And toast our calves while I unfold to you
Matters more weighty, less fantastical
Than our light supper talk, than rhymes and women.

ENGLISH 2

A New Play for the Globe

PLAGUE take this taper! What a feeble light
By which to pen the dull lines of this play!
I should have done this portion yesterday,
Then I’d be courting Rosalind tonight.
How slow the words come, and when come how trite!
At this slow wit the crowd will never bray
And haw with senseless laughter. I must weigh
These words more carefully before I write!

“O, now be gone! more light and light it grows.”
How oft have maidens whispered that to me!
“More light and light?—More dark and dark our woes!”
A likely speech for Romeo. I’ll see
If ale will help me finish out this scene.
’T will need more spirit to delight the Queen!

ENGLISH 7

Gulliver Embarks on Further Travels

IS THIS, then, the end?
To die here at dusk
Without the warm hand of a friend
To steady the shaking husk
My wasted body’s sunk to?

The little squares of window glass darken.
Wide spreading shadows
Like opening ebony fans, crawl
Slowly, slowly up the yellow wall.

Strange forms lurk and rustle in the shadows—
Crouching Yahoos gibbering in the corners.
I shall ignore the hairy monsters of the darkness.
I am not afraid.

How thickly liquid the darkness grows!
It gurgles about me like black water.

Stella, a candle please.
Are you going to fail me now?
Please, dear Stella, a candle!
Ah . . . but I'd forgotten. . . .

Someone has lit a candle.
Stella never dared disobey me. . . .
But Stella is not here.
It must have been that petticoated nurse!

Now I am not afraid.
The tall candle laughs cheerily.
The filthy Yahoos hate light.
They have burrowed deep into the thick shadows.
They will not venture near me now
With their hot stinking breaths.

Why, yes, Mr. Addison,
At Will's after the play.
We shall call for pipes and paper
And I will copy my latest verses for you—
Oh, the Whig dogs will smart, sir!
The rogues will sizzle
And fry in their own knavery!

And then, Sir Charles, you will speak to the Queen?
Mention my services, Your Lordship.
My untiring services for Her Majesty. . . .
(The stupid cow!)

No, Stella, the exercises are untidy and
Bristling with errors.
You are to do them again, young lady!
What if your eyes *are* tired!
I said—*again!*

My wig, Patrick, my wig!
The Duchess has sent her coach
To carry me like a gentleman
To her dinner.
My wig, you drunken whelp!
I' faith, I'll discharge you tomorrow!

I adjure you, Sirs, to refuse this copper!
This is no money, but trash.
Ireland will be undone.
Undone, Sirs, by this bloated Hanover
And his wily mistress. . . .

So Stella is forty today!
We grow older, my dear, older and stouter.
Of course I love you.

I love you twice as much
As when you were twenty
Because
There is twice as much to love.

God! To drag my battered self
Back to this wretched Dublin!
A broken cur crawling home to die.
They have all betrayed me—
Depraved deceitful dogs!
To die in the Irish mud!

How dry my mouth grows!
Stella . . . Patrick . . . Stella . . .
Ah, they have all left me—
Birds from a blighted tree!
Water . . . a glass to drink . . .
And a fresh candle.

The nurse must drowse.
The wick is choking
In its own tallow.
Nurse!
Whispers . . . only whispers. . . .

The Yahoos are stirring again.
See! Their grotesque shadows

Wheel, sharp and broad, across the walls and ceiling!
Hear their tongues click against their mouth roofs!
Hear their dry joints crackle!
Creatures dripping filth!

These heavy quilts are smothering me.
Or is it the weight of Yahoos?
God, I will *not* die!
(There strangles the candle at last.)
Please, dear God, give me another . . . hour.
. . . dear God . . . whom I have served. . . .

All is very dark now.
But behind my eyes a clear flame burns.
The Yahoos cannot reach it.
Cannot pluck at it with their hairy claws.

Behind my eyes
Stella holds uplifted the white taper.
All else crumbles. . . . The Yahoos
Are shovelling heaps of black dust
Onto my aching body
. . . and fingers closing on my throat!

The taper burns close to Stella's fingers.
Do not drop it, dear Stella.
Do not drop it, I say!

Even that gone now . . .
Even that . . .
My gold to a madhouse—ha!
My gold . . . to . . . a mad . . . mad . . . house . .
And I a fool. Ah, God, and I a fool!

ENGLISH 52

The Rivals

“ . . . Sheridan himself living on into
the next century, until, in 1816, he
died with bailiffs in the house . . . ”

AGAIN the cursed fever had returned!
It scorched his wasted limbs like fierce hot flame.
He writhed. His blistered tongue muttered the name
Of one long dead. The bailiffs laughed, concerned
Only with debts and furniture. He seemed
A mad old pauper whose white matted hair
Got in his bleary eyes. The house stripped bare
They left him there to die. He slept . . . and dreamed

White blossoms brushed his cheek. Just twentytwo
He loitered down a bright sun mottled path.
Quite dazzling him, she came. Her blazing blue
Eyes mischievous. He whispered, “All of Bath
Kneels at . . .” Thick darkness closed. “Elizabeth!”
He sobbed. And groping for her found lean Death.

HOME FOR CHRISTMAS VACATION

WET, shining snow choked gutters, clogged car tracks.
The cold, like icy water, bathed the street.
The walk was thickly crusted with black ice,
And tiny icicles gleamed in the whiskers
Of old men who sold pencils.

Thick as flakes
Of snow the crowd of shoppers cramped the street.

This city which in fifty years had sprung
Up from the prairie soil to pound and roar,
To slap its thighs and laugh great belly laughs,
Belonged to me, and I belonged to it—
Sons of the prairie both of us; and I
Loved it with the rough, shame faced love of brothers.

And now, in bitter winter, I'd returned
To tramp alone its ice blocked streets, to brood
Upon another winter—nights of stars
Blazing and snapping in a clear blue sky,
Reaches of silver snow beneath the moon,
Trees sharply etched along a country road,
Where we had driven. . . .

She was married now.
Marriage! The shears that snip the threads of Youth!
Yes, she was married. An old empty ache
Gnawed me like ancient hungers; old desires
Crashed into flame—dry fuel on smouldering fires.

Married! What madness! We had broken off
After a night of violent, jealous quarrels.
Then I'd gone back to school and she—well, she,
Being a woman, found another soon.
Quite probably they'd had their favorite song
As we . . . their secret jests, their warm handclasps
With fingers woven in close confidence.
They'd danced. He'd held her tender, pliant body—
A smirking, shaggy Pan who pawed a Dryad.
They'd kissed—tight eager lips pressed hungrily
Through drowsy, honeyed aeons. . . .

Memory

Uncoiled—like rising ropes of sluggish incense—
The tattered rumors that had limped to me
Through those dark months of trying to forget.
Rumor—stray phrases in the careless letters
Of friends; odd clippings of prosaic news
Concerning her and him—Mr. and Mrs.
(Whatever was his name) had moved away
To such and such a town . . . he'd practice law
With some tobacco squirting country lawyer.

And she? What would she do in such a town?
She who was born to dance in narrow slippers
Sweeping a polished floor in flashing arcs.
She'd be a morning glory in a field
Of growing corn. Would steel hooves trample her?
Would sickles cut her, would the noonday sun
Parch her bright blossoms, wither her cool leaves?

Such were my thoughts as through the knife sharp cold,
As through the drifted snow and iron tough ice
I tramped. Ah, winter was a dreary waste
Of days heaped up like slush, of frozen nights,
Of months as bleak and as interminable
As sorrow for the dead.

I thought of love. . . .

*Love was a day in May with sunlight printed
In broken yellow squares upon a lawn,
Love was a coin still warm from being minted,
Or breath in wind—now silversharp, now gone.*

*Love was a goldstreaked bubble blown from
wines,
Bursting upon the touch to nothingness;
Or stately verses on old valentines—
All this was love, all this . . . and more . . .
and less. . . .*

She was the first, I thought, she was the first!
And not again shall any, as did she,
Turn leaden days to gold with alchemy
As old as woman and as strong as thirst.
No more will April pour along my limbs
Love's breathless promises, no, I must be
Content to bow and kiss perfunctorily,
And substitute for love—love's synonyms.

Love's synonyms! My lips upon a wrist,
(An empty gesture now!) A scented glove
Drawn gently from long fingers, finely wrought,
But not as fine as hers. Thus through each tryst
I'd be reminded sadly, that in love
So much of what is good must come to naught!

So much of what is good must come to naught!
The crystal love of Dante and the lust
Of Helen for bright Paris . . . down to dust
All crash like crumbling pagan columns, caught
In Samson's mighty grasp . . . to naught, to naught!
The swelling bud, the leaf, the autumn rust—
To dust, so rolls the cycle, down to dust!
Thus, sick at heart at thought of Death's cold thrust,
I cried, as Sidney cried, emotion fraught:
"Desire! Desire! I have too dearly bought!"

Desire . . . desire . . . I lifted up my eyes
And saw what could not be. "Lies," laughed I, "lies!"
How hard love dies, how hard, how hard love dies!

Desire . . . desire . . . no, no! It could not be!
A figment of my mind was duping me.
I lifted up my eyes. Yes, it was she.

"I thought that you'd decided not to speak,"
She laughed. (My legs were trembling, getting weak.)
"I didn't know that you were back in town."
(Ah, God, how brown her eyes were, God, how
brown!)

We should have met, by laws of poetry
And laws of epics, by some Grecian sea
Where great Homeric waves surge savagely
Beating and thundering . . . where great cliffs drop.
Where shrill winds shriek like a gargantuan fife.
But we met not in epics, but in life,
In front of a confectionery shop.

The smallest trifles of that meeting burn
Within my brain . . . though of the words we spoke
I can recall but few . . . the hurrying folk
Jostled and bumped us . . . curious bits return:
The window with chocolates heaped in a tin urn,

A sentence from a passing salesman's joke,
A florist's boy who lugged a potted fern!

These trifles frame the memory of her face
Like close grained linen framed by two cent lace.

Then presently I mentioned a cafe
Where we might chat an hour quietly.
She ordered, as she used to, steaming tea
With lemon, wafers, and a tall parfait.
And all time fused and melted for a space,
All objects blurred and swam but her white face.

How nice to laugh and chat again at tea!
And in that crowd, how lucky we had met!
And did I think she'd changed? No, no! Why she
Was ageless! Would she have a cigarette?
Her husband disapproved . . . but—well—
perhaps . . .

This was her lark! No, she'd leave on her wraps.

No, she'd not changed. Her hair was still the brown
Of flaky, sweet tobacco, and her eyes
Still mirrored dreams of . . . was it great renown
In music . . . as of old? I'd told no lies
When I said she'd not changed. But yet . . . but yet
A shadow dimmed her face—was it regret?

We spoke of friends. How Geraldine had died,
How Eunice had made good upon the stage,
How Paul was in Berlin, how Bill had tried
The A. P. foreign service, and how age
Had smitten old Professor Lockvey down.
But we spoke not of her bleak country town.

And then with smiles and ripples of light laughter
We mentioned love—our love—how much we were
Love's slaves four years ago—'twas so long after
We could speak frankly now. . . . She drew her fur
Around her chin. Smoke from her cigarette
Had stung her eyes . . . because her eyes were wet.

"Sometimes," I said, "love comes with trumpets
sounding,
A mighty army with light splintering spears.
Sometimes love comes with beaten drums resounding,
Marching triumphant down the sickled years.
My love for you came like the soft rustling
Of warm winds among lilacs in the spring."

"Do you recall," she asked, "the precious nonsense
We used to talk? You'd say I was the breath
Of life, that I was thirst and air and incense
To be remembered at the point of death. . . .
And that I was the first . . . and last one too?"
I nodded. "I remember. It was true."

We spoke of how it used to comfort us
To read of other lovers: Juliet
Who died for love; or Chaucer's Troilus.
Or Eloise, who never could forget. . . .
But always—shades of Dante!—to the floor
The book would drop—and we would read no more.

We mentioned how when winter turned to spring
We used to climb a hill above the town.
How through a lazy afternoon she'd sing
Old songs. We'd watch the thin blue dusk sift down
Clogging with shadow streets and homes of men,
To which, with dragging steps, we'd turn again.

How often on that sunny, windy crest
We spoke of days to come . . . which never came.
I'd write great stuff . . . and she, ah, she confessed
She'd planned to play her violin to fame.
How often on the crushing wheel of ruth
Are broken the majestic hopes of Youth!

That spot, so legends of the prairie go,
Had served the Blackfeet as a signal hill.
One day, exploring idly with the toe
Of walking shoes, a dry brook where a rill
Of silver still trailed through the arid bed,
I kicked up an old Indian arrowhead.

She nodded. She remembered. Yes, she had
It hidden in a drawer with all my letters.
On drab, grey days when earth itself was sad
She'd read them, live again the past, the fetters
Of life would loosen . . . she smiled. Had I not
Read *Main Street* to her . . . Carol Kennicott . . . ?

She was a mother now. Perhaps I knew?
I didn't? Oh my, yes. A fine young lad.
Bright as—how old? Next month he would be two.
And I should hear him talk—say “mamma,” “dad.”
She'd come to town to buy him soldiermen.
Now she must go. Her train left at five ten.

But what about her music? Did she play
Grieg's *Morning* any more? Or *Roundelay*?
She'd dropped her music, hadn't played a scale
For months. Well, was she happy? Yes. She knew
I saw her white lips quiver as she drew
Lines on the cloth with a pink fingernail.

I walked alone again. The early dusk
Thickened, grew palpable. The first street lamps
Began to glow, dripping their mellow light
Upon the orange snow. The sky had darkened
Save in the west, where the sun's golden stain
Unwashed by evening, warmed the wide clear sky.

Somewhere she rode into that band of sky,
Above the smooth click click of beating wheels.
She'd think of soldiermen, a baby boy,
A husband who would meet her at the station—
A wooden station where clean shining milk cans
Would be unloaded hastily beneath
The watery mist of light the station lamp
Would spray down from its tarnished tin reflector.
She'd kiss her husband as she'd kiss an aunt.
She'd kiss her boy as she would kiss a lover.
They'd get into his brand new Ford sedan
(Makes sixty on the level—darned good bus)
And bump along a frozen, rutted street,
(The council's voted paving for next year)
And he would tell her of this case and that.
And she would ponder on this case and that. . . .

And I? Well, first youth's over, and the sting
Of first youth's over, too . . . the growing pains:
The agony the cell feels at division,
The cramped moth's pain at cracking a cocoon,
The anguish of a tender, stretching sapling
Straining its branches upward to the sky.
The hurt a swollen seed must feel on bursting
Among harsh grains of earth, the pain of pushing
Up to the sunwashed air, the rainwashed wind.

First youth was over, but a line came back
From English 72 to comfort me.
"The best is yet to be." The best . . . the best. . . .

"Somewhere another waits. Meanwhile turn back—
Back to the books. The silver of the past
Is yours to take: the lucid, crystal words
That ring down from the Greeks. The iron of Rome
Is yours for forging. All the jests of Chaucer
Are yours to find . . . for laughter, too, is good.
Shakspere awaits! The Mermaid's growing merry,
And marry! Where are you? All, all are yours!
John Dryden to delight your sense of form
With couplets whose last words snap like a whip.
Swift waits to ship with you to Lilliput,
And Sheridan to bow with you in Bath.
Keats waits to tell you that a thing of beauty
Remains a joy forever . . . and that Beauty
Is to be harvested on every side
And not in woman only. . . ."

Thus I spoke
Unto my growing self. That, too, is Harvard.

Thomas W. Duncan was graduated from Harvard College in 1929 and is now doing newspaper work His poem *From a Harvard Notebook* won the Lloyd McKim Garrison award in the competition for undergraduates and others of his poems have appeared in magazines For permission to publish thanks are due the Committee of Award The Maizeland Press has printed two hundred and fifty numbered copies of this volume from Caslon Old Face type on Utopian laid paper

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY



142 304

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY